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FOR ACTION

RECOMMENDATION TO THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

International Child Development Centre

The Executive Director recommends that the Executive Board authorize a three-year extension for the International Child Development Centre for the period 1991-1993, for which a total allocation of $11.8 million is proposed, of which the Government of Italy has pledged 10.5 billion lire (approximately $9.4 million) for the Centre's core programmes, with the remainder to be sought from other donors for specific activities.

CONTENTS

	Paragraphs	Page
INTRODUCTION	1 - 3	3
I. MEDIUM-TERM PLANNING FOR THE INNOCENTI CENTRE: GENERAL TRENDS	4 - 9	3
II. PROJECTED TRENDS AND ACTIVITIES IN THE MAJOR PROGRAMME AREAS	10 - 20	5
A. National capacity-building	10 - 11	5
B. Economic policies and mobilization of resources for children	12 - 13	6
C. Rights of the child	14 - 15	6
D. Needs of the urban child	16 - 17	7
E. Family support	18	8
F. Training, information and documentation	19 - 20	8
III. STAFFING AND FINANCING	21 - 24	9
IV. RECOMMENDATION	25	10
Annex. Estimated breakdown of expenditures		11

INTRODUCTION

1. The UNICEF International Child Development Centre (often referred to as the Innocenti Centre) was established at Florence, Italy, in 1988 to undertake and promote policy analysis and applied research, to provide a forum for international professional exchanges of experience and to advocate and disseminate ideas and policies for child survival, protection and development. In areas of programme relevance, on a very selective basis, the Centre also provides training and capacity-building opportunities for UNICEF staff, concerned government officials and the staff of other institutions with which UNICEF cooperates.

2. Progress on the establishment of the Centre and the results of its first two full years of programme activities have been reported annually to the Executive Board, most recently in document E/ICEF/1991/L.9. In the present paper, the Executive Director recommends a three-year extension of the initial authorization for the Centre (decision 1987/22) and summarizes plans for its second phase of operations for the period 1991-1993.

3. Assuming authorization by the Executive Board, the Government of Italy has made a firm commitment to continue its financial support for the Centre's basic costs. Building on complementary funding for one of the Centre's four major programmes provided by the Government of Finland through the Finnish Agency for International Development (FINNAID), the Executive Director proposes continued gradual diversification of the Centre's financing. The Government of Italy is expected to maintain a long-term commitment to provide adequate funding for core programmes, while modest additional contributions will be sought from other donors for specific activities. For the period 1991-1993, a total allocation of $11.8 million is proposed, of which $9.4 million (at the January 1991 exchange rate) would be provided by the Government of Italy.

I. MEDIUM-TERM PLANNING FOR THE INNOCENTI CENTRE: GENERAL TRENDS

4. The Centre is still in its infancy, having begun its work only in September 1988. It is too early to forecast all the comparative advantages developing from this new UNICEF resource, but a number of conclusions are emerging from its initial activities. At its third meeting, held in November 1990, the Centre's Advisory Committee reviewed progress during the first phase and considered several policy issues for the near to medium-term future. The present chapter summarizes the main conclusions of that meeting and subsequent consultations with senior UNICEF management regarding the overall strategy for the further development of the Centre.

5. Perhaps most importantly, it is proposed that the principal focus of the Centre's efforts remain research and policy studies, especially on emerging policy issues of direct relevance to the well-being of children and families

in need. Advocacy and training or capacity-building are also appropriately part of the Centre's mandate, but these activities should emanate largely from its research and other analytical work. A strong research and policy-oriented core is needed for each of the major programme areas (see paras. 10-16 below).

6. As the results of research and policy analyses continue to emerge, including an increasing number of publishable studies, there will be a natural shift in strategy towards disseminating these results, especially in policy circles, not just through publications, but also through high-level media events, "Innocenti seminars", policy conferences and networking efforts, both within and outside UNICEF. Accordingly, the Centre's staff is being strengthened in the areas of information, documentation and communications in order to facilitate this type of outreach and policy impact. Initial efforts to link the Centre's efforts to the widely recognized information and communications capacity of UNICEF, both at headquarters and in the field, will also be strengthened during the next three years.

7. Following the November 1990 Advisory Committee meeting, a decision was taken to transfer responsibility for national capacity-building for child survival and development (CSD) in Africa, one of the Centre's four major programmes, from its base in Florence. The programme is now reaching the stage where it requires a more Africa-based approach to implement strategies and guidelines developed over the last two and a half years. A final decision has not yet been reached as to whether a new programme should replace it on the Centre's already ambitious research agenda, especially in the light of requests, particularly from Central and Eastern Europe, for the Centre to expand and strengthen its work in child poverty and deprivation in industrialized countries. Various options are being explored, including a proposal on "family support" (see para. 18 below) that would build on existing research and policy studies at Florence and facilitate cooperation among the Centre's research programmes.

8. The first phase of work has demonstrated the importance of working closely with UNICEF field and regional offices and researchers from developing countries, who themselves are often consultants and partners for UNICEF country programming and evaluation. This approach helps to keep the Centre's research agenda oriented towards policy and relevant to programmes, and enriches the studies with a strong "real world" orientation, sometimes in overly abstract areas such as "child rights". UNICEF field staff and their allies thus gain exposure to broader policy issues and internationally recognized experts as a result of their participation in multi-country studies, Innocenti seminars and other meetings. Because the Centre has a relatively small staff, the cooperation of other institutions and individuals is important. Links with ongoing UNICEF-supported country programmes make this type of networking especially attractive and distinctive within the United Nations system and help to strengthen research and policy analysis capacities in developing countries.

9. In response to encouragement from Executive Board members, and within the guidelines of the medium-term plan (E/ICEF/1990/3 and Corr.1, para. 138), the

Centre proposes to expand gradually its cooperation with researchers and policy specialists in industrialized countries on carefully selected issues related to children and families living in poverty or suffering from other serious deprivation. Important policy issues are also being identified in areas where national boundaries may be irrelevant or where increasingly similar risks are facing disadvantaged families and children in both developing and industrialized countries, such as the international traffic in drugs and the problems of immigrant children. Three of the Centre's programmes (economic policies, child rights and the urban child) already include cases drawn from industrialized countries, while efforts are under way to determine the benefits of comparative policy analysis and professional exchanges across the often arbitrary distinction between North and South.

II. PROJECTED TRENDS AND ACTIVITIES IN THE MAJOR PROGRAMME AREAS

A. National capacity-building

10. In addition to the developments summarized in the 1990 progress report (E/ICEF/1991/L.9), a number of trends and proposed new activities in each of the four programme areas are worth noting because of their future implications. The most significant development involves the transfer of the national capacity-building programme to an African base in order to be closer to the countries where the early experimental work is under way and where the principal challenges of country- and regional-level operations must be faced. Both of the senior Professionals concerned with the conceptualization, planning and coordination of this programme at Florence, including the Centre's Deputy Director, will move to an East African location, probably in Uganda.

11. As specific needs and opportunities arise, the Centre will consider possible transitional or backstopping support for the national capacity-building programme during its relocation, particularly regarding ongoing objectives of the Florence-based programmes. For example, the Centre is seeking ways to encourage follow-up to and dissemination of results from its first two Innocenti seminars on early childhood development and participatory development. The African universities involved in the national capacity-building programme are interested in those and other research topics being explored at the Centre. It would be logical to explore possible future cooperation with researchers at these universities, in line with the Centre's above-mentioned cooperative approach to research and policy studies. There may also be opportunities for the Centre to contribute to the objectives of promoting interregional exchanges of experience on participatory strategies for achieving linkages between universities, communities and Governments, and sharpening UNICEF capacity, as well as that of its partners, for undertaking operations research for CSD programmes.

B. Economic policies and mobilization of resources for children

12. In this area, work has been concentrated on three projects: (a) structural adjustment policies in sub-Saharan Africa; (b) financing social services; and (c) child poverty and deprivation in industrialized countries. In addition, following the successful Warsaw roundtable in October 1990 on "Safety Nets for Children in Central and Eastern Europe", the Centre's economics staff are gradually increasing the scope of their work on socio-economic policies affecting families and children in that region during its difficult and perhaps uncertain transition to the market economy and to more participatory political systems. Efforts during the remainder of 1991 and much of 1992 will focus on the continued publication of research results (already well advanced), including three or four books that should be attractive to major commercial publishers; the dissemination of research reports; and initial advocacy and knowledge-sharing with UNICEF staff, research institutions, National Committees for UNICEF, major non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and senior officials of both donor and recipient Governments and agencies. The information and dissemination strategy includes the preparation of local language versions of country studies and national conferences organized by UNICEF field offices or National Committees and their local partners.

13. During 1992, it should be feasible to begin to shift the focus of this programme towards two basic objectives: (a) integrating the results of the first phase into the UNICEF policy-making and programming process, both on issues that are relatively new for UNICEF and on the ongoing challenge of strengthening the understanding and ability of UNICEF to influence the critical economic dimensions of child-related policies and programmes; and (b) undertaking new research and analysis of social policy-making for the child and the family, concentrating on emerging issues of particular relevance to industrialized countries, both East and West, as well as the rapidly industrializing and/or urbanizing countries of several developing regions, notably East Asia and Latin America. Assuming that the Executive Board will respond positively to the initial activities of UNICEF concerning the analysis of "safety nets for children" in Eastern and Central Europe, and that some additional funding and staff resources can be identified, this programme could increase its contribution to work in this area.

C. Rights of the child

14. Projected activities in this major programme area are closely related to the challenging opportunities offered to UNICEF and its allies since the entry into force of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. These activities include (a) analysis and advocacy of implementation strategies and monitoring mechanisms, including indicators of child rights; (b) promoting better understanding of the socio-legal and policy implications of key Convention articles at international, national and local levels; and (c) identifying the most appropriate child rights allies of UNICEF and assisting with

capacity-building and policy advocacy strategies to achieve a cooperative approach to future UNICEF work on children's rights, taking advantage of the comparative strengths of various key public and non-governmental institutions. One of the more sensitive issues requiring improved understanding concerns the related, but sometimes competing, needs and rights of women and children. As UNICEF generally seeks to strengthen the women's dimensions of its programmes and to promote gender equity in the full development of children's potential, and as the importance of women's movements for the fulfilment of many of the goals for children for the 1990s is recognized, the issue of women's and children's rights will surely deserve increased attention from UNICEF as a whole. The Centre will seek to support this effort through careful analysis, in addition to policy advocacy, when appropriate.

15. One of the fundamental principles of the Convention appears in article 3, which states that "in all actions concerning children ... the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration". This principle is already recognized by the majority of national legal systems, but there are very diverse interpretations in different political and cultural settings. In most Western societies, for example, it is often assumed that the child's best interests are well served by policies and practices emphasizing autonomy and individuality. In other cultures, including most of the world's remaining "traditional societies", the child's links to the family and community or tribe are likely to be considered of greater importance. The Centre proposes to sponsor a major study over the next two years, including cases drawn from diverse cultural settings, on the concept of the "best interests of the child", from which an important book is expected to result. It is also expected that this effort will aid reformers seeking to change customs or traditional practices widely viewed as detrimental to children, in addition to children's advocates who have identified culturally sensitive approaches to protecting children's "best interests" and who recognize the importance of the flexibility required in implementing the Convention.

D. Needs of the urban child

16. Addressing the challenges of rapid urbanization and the progressive deterioration of the quality of life for children and families in urban settings, both North and South, during its first year the urban child programme has concentrated on a project to assess the situations of urban children in especially difficult circumstances, particularly street and working children, and the types of preventive interventions already developed, in close interaction with UNICEF country offices selected for their innovative programmes. Four major focuses have emerged: (a) the importance of analysing changes in family structures and assessing how they are affecting urban children's survival and psycho-social development; (b) the identification of less visible disadvantaged children such as adolescent girls; (c) the importance of "giving children their own voices" in assessing their situations, and exploring solutions to the problems of low-income urban families; and (d) the need to assess programmes and interventions from the point of view of prevention, affordability and sustainability.

17. The urban child programme collaborates closely with the Centre's host institution, the Istituto degli Innocenti, on studies in Italian cities, and is considering including situations in Central and Eastern Europe, perhaps linked to the Centre's increasing concern for child development and changing patterns of parenting and child-rearing. This would also be in line with the development of more explicit reciprocal North-South exchanges of social policy concepts and programme experiences relating to some of the increasingly similar problems facing families living in difficult and often dangerous urban environments throughout the world. The results of this first project will become available during 1991-1992 as occasional papers and monographs and in mid-1991 the programme is expected (a) to focus increasingly on the dissemination of results to the UNICEF policy-making and programming process, as well as to other agencies, institutions and NGOs; and (b) to begin to address specific topics related to common issues of children North and South, such as child development challenges by age group and gender (with a focus on adolescent girls), the growing menace of drug abuse affecting children and the special needs of migrant and immigrant families facing poverty and sharp cultural, racial and other differences in their new urban environments. The latter will be undertaken with working groups including both researchers and policy makers, as well as professionals from UNICEF and other international agencies.

E. Family support

18. Regarding the first phase of activities at the Centre in general, there are indications from each of the major programme areas that a more concerted effort should be made to address key policy and programme issues in a new area, which might be described as combining UNICEF concern for early childhood development and women's multiple roles in society with a fresh look at a variety of family support policies that are emerging in both industrialized and developing countries. Family support, of course, is a broad topic, but in this context it might be viewed as comprising largely key policy measures concerning financial support, support for parents (including time off from work, plus education, for child-rearing) and affordable but developmentally strong child-care programmes. Some of these elements are being explored through ongoing activities, including the financial support and other economic dimensions. The broader social policy orientation of the Centre's economic policies programme, however, might well be complemented in future by a closer review of policy implementation and programme impact at more operational levels.

F. Training, information and documentation

19. A number of projected activities in training, information and documentation are mentioned in the 1990 progress report (E/ICEF/1991/L.9). Regarding the Innocenti seminar, experience has suggested that one such major event per year is all that can be managed within anticipated staffing and budgetary limits and that the cooperation of the UNICEF Training Section, in

addition to resource persons from inside and outside UNICEF, is important for the success of these in-depth seminars. Partly to facilitate the exploration of increased attention to issues of social policy and family support systems (see para. 18 above), and drawing on the Centre's work on child rights and on the urban child, the next seminar is likely to be on "Women's Work and Child Care". In the information, documentation and communications area, it should also be noted that arrangements are being made with other UNICEF divisions to hold an annual media seminar at Florence on critical child-related policy issues. These seminars would bring together outstanding professionals, senior editors and other members of the media. This experimental venture will build first on a media event on children and the environment, scheduled for March 1991, primarily for Eastern European journalists. The event will draw partly on the Centre's analysis of child poverty and deprivation in industrialized countries.

20. The growing collaboration with the Istituto degli Innocenti in the information and documentation area merits special mention as part of a broader networking and outreach effort that will facilitate the dissemination and advocacy objectives of both institutions through easier information searches. The Centre and the Istituto are also exploring the prospects of establishing in Florence a highly user-oriented Videoteca Innocenti (video library), that could include a major international collection of outstanding video materials, plus a carefully selected number of films and documentaries on children's problems and innovative programme responses.

III. STAFFING AND FINANCING

21. A summary of the Centre's current staffing pattern and projections is provided in paragraphs 30 to 34 of the 1990 progress report (E/ICEF/1991/L.9), while paragraphs 38 to 40 provide background on the budget. For the period 1991-1993, it will not be necessary to raise with the Government of Italy the issue of increasing the number of authorized internationally recruited staff members, who are now limited by the formal agreement to seven, although it may become relevant at a later date. (Senior fellows, other visiting researchers, Junior Professional Officers (JPOs) and seconded staff are not included in this figure.) Four of the seven staff members must be available virtually full-time as the senior coordinators of the four major research areas. In addition to the advocacy work of the Director (who may in the future also assume princip. responsibility for one of the programme areas), another senior staff member is needed to manage the area of communications and information, including networking with action-oriented organizations, especially in Europe, for relevant dissemination and advocacy activities.

22. Furthermore, in order to have one or two internationally recruited posts available for programme work, it may be possible before the end of the period 1991-1993 to convert the administrative and other support positions, currently filled by two international staff, to locally recruited posts, especially since it has been agreed that local recruitment for the Centre can be undertaken in any of the countries of the European Economic Community. As far

as overall staff size is concerned, the total, including fellows, JPOs and research assistants (some on special service agreements), is expected to be about 30. The cooperative patterns of research with other institutions and other parts of UNICEF should allow the Centre to operate effectively for the foreseeable future with that size staff.

23. The three-year commitment of the Government of Italy for 10.5 billion lire ($9.4 million at the January 1991 exchange rate) is the same amount as allocated for the first phase, 1988-1990. Although it is hoped that future contributions from the Government of Italy can be protected from inflation and allow for modestly scaled programme expansion, it is necessary to pursue this issue at the present time, largely because of the strengthening of the lire in relation to the United States dollar. It would be desirable, however, to continue the process, initiated with FINNAID, of diversifying the Centre's financial base.

24. A breakdown of projected expenditures is provided in the annex to the present document.

IV. RECOMMENDATION

25. The Executive Director recommends a total authorization of $11.76 million for the period 1991-1993, including the pledged contribution of approximately $9.4 million from the Government of Italy, plus a margin of 25 per cent for supplementary funding from other donors for specific projects. The Executive Director further recommends that the Centre continue to be funded fully from supplementary funds rather than general resources, as originally decided by the Executive Board.

Annex

ESTIMATED BREAKDOWN OF EXPENDITURES a/

(In thousands of United States dollars)

	1991	1992	1993	TOTAL
Programme costs				
Core activities (currently national capacity-building for CSD, economic policies for children, child rights and needs of the urban child); research, policy analysis, workshops, publications	2 000	2 000	2 000	6 000
Exploratory activities in other areas, including family support policies and child development	200	200	200	600
Senior fellows	250	250	250	750
Training (including Innocenti global seminars)	200	200	200	600
Information, documentation and communications	400	400	400	1 200
Cooperation with the Istituto degli Innocenti	320	320	320	960
Subtotal	3 370	3 370	3 370	10 110
Programme support costs				
General management (salaries and other personnel costs for Director's Administration and Finance Office)	400	400	400	1 200
General operating costs (communication, travel, supplies, maintenance, equipment, general publications, Advisory Committee meetings)	150	150	150	450
Subtotal	550	550	550	1 650
Total	3 920	3 920	3 920	11 760 b/

a/ The three-year contribution from the Government of Italy is 10.5 billion lire, the equivalent of $9.4 million at the January 1991 exchange rate (1,115 lire = $US 1.00), with the remainder to be sought from other donors.

b/ Less the 1 per cent charge for recovery of UNICEF incremental operating costs for supplementary-funded projects.